DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 263 612 CS 209 450

AUTHOR Reutzel, D. Ray; Merrill, Jimmie D.
TITLE Writing with Basals: A Sentence Combining Approach to Comprehension.
PUB DATE May 85
NOTE 13p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Reading Association (30th, New Orleans, LA, May 5-9, 1985).
PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom Use - Guides (For Teachers) (052) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Basal Reading; Elementary Education; Instructional Materials; *Reading Materials; *Sentence Combining; Sentence Structure; *Teaching Methods; *Writing Exercises; Writing Instruction

ABSTRACT

Sentence combining techniques can be used with basal readers to help students develop writing skills. The first technique is addition, characterized by using the connecting word "and" to join two or more base sentences together. The second technique is called "embedding," and is characterized by putting parts of two or more base sentences together without the use of "and." The third technique is "coordination," which joins two equally important base sentences together using one of four grammatical elements: coordinating conjunctions, a semicolon, a semicolon with a conjunctive adverb, or a correlative conjunction. The final technique, "subordination," involves combining two or more base sentences to emphasize a dependence of one upon the other, by using a subordinating conjunction, relative connectors, or prepositions. There are five signaling devices that can be used to direct students' attention to key points in the text where sentence combining can occur: arrows, umbrella signals, margin signals, footnote signals, and boxes. (Examples of the four techniques are included in the paper, and the appendixes contain lists of coordinating and correlative conjunctions, as well as conjunctive adverbs, and examples of basal story excerpts using the signaling devices and the sentence combining techniques.) (HTH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

ED263612

Writing with Basals: A Sentence Combining Approach to Comprehension

D. Ray Reutzel, Ph.D.
Jimmie D. Merrill, Ed.D.
Department of Elementary Education
School of Education
Weber State College
Ogden, UT 84408

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Jimmie D. Merrill

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

CS209450

Writing with Basals: A Sentence Combining Approach to Comprehension

"Writing with the basal?!" exclaimed a second grade teacher. "I thought the basal was only for teaching reading!" Unfortunately, too many of us have become conditioned to viewing the basal in the narrow perspective of a reader. The basal contains language, and language is the stuff of which writing is made. Carl Smith (1983) , author of a major basal reader, recently encouraged more use of the basal for teaching writing. He even went so far as to list writing techniques which enhance both comprehension and composition. One of the techniques he listed was sentence combining. However, he did not make any specific strategy recommendations for using sentence combining in conjunction with the basal. This paper will attempt to define, demonstrate, and apply the techniques of sentence combining to basal stories.

To begin, sentence combining is defined by Strong (1983) as a process of "putting short, choppy sentences together to make more interesting, readable ones." (p. xv). Four sentence combining techniques useful at the elementary level will be defined, and described with examples. These are: addition, embedding, coordinating, and subordinating. The first, addition, is characterized by using the connecting word "and" to join two or more base sentences together. This will result in pairs of words and phrases or series of words and phrases. Examples of addition follow:

The teacher worked on the bulletin board.
The students worked on the bulletin board.

Writeout: The teacher and students worked on the bulletin board.

They colored their pictures.
They glued their art projects.
They finished their poems.

Writeout: They colored their pictures, glued their art projects, and finished their poems.

The second technique is called embedding. Embedding is characterized by putting parts of two or more base sentences together without the use of the connecting word "and." This results in words taken from the other base sentences which modify main words in the first base sentence. Examples of embedding include:

The teacher compliments the children.
The teacher is surprised.
The children are industrious.

Writeout: The surprised teacher compliments the industrious children.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

A twinkle appears in her eyes.
The appearance is quick.
Her eyes are smiling.

Writeout: A twinkle quickly appears in her smiling eyes.

The third sentence combining technique is coordination. A coordinating sentence combination joins two equally important base sentences together using one of four grammatical elements: coordinating conjunctions, a semicolon, a semicolon with a conjunction adverb, or a correlative conjunction. (A listing of coordinating and correlative conjunctions as well as conjunctive adverbs are included in Appendix A of this paper.) Examples of a coordinating sentence combining technique follow:

The classroom was noisy.
The teacher called for quiet.

Writeout: The classroom was noisy, so the teacher called for quiet.

The teacher looked displeased.
The children began to quiet down.

Writeout: The teacher looked displeased; consequently, the children began to quiet down.

The final sentence combining technique is called "subordination. Subordinating involves the combining of two or more base sentences to emphasize a dependence of one upon the other. This is generally accomplished by using: a subordinating conjunction, relative connectors, or prepositions. (A list of subordinating conjunctions are included in Appendix A of this paper). Examples include:

The classroom is noisy.
The teacher calls for quiet.

Writeout: Because the classroom is noisy, the teacher calls for quiet.

The teacher looked displeased.
The children began to quiet down.

Writeout: After the teacher looked displeased, the children began to quiet down.

Signaling Devices

To help direct students' attention to key points in text where sentence combination may occur, or to offer hints on which techniques or words are needed to make a sentence combination, Strong (1981) illustrates the use of four signaling devices. These are: arrows,

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

umbella signals, margin signals, and footnote signals. To these we should like to add the box signal for use with the basal. This then brings our total signaling devices to five.

The first signal is an arrow signal( ). The arrow is used to mark the place for adding modifying information. Arrows are most useful in connection with the embedding sentence combining technique. The second signal, the umbrella signal ( ), marks the word underneath the umbrella for embedding. The third signal, the margin signal ( ), is used with coordinating & correlative conjunctions as well as with conjunctive adverbs to signal the indicated sentence transformation. The fourth signal, the footnote ( ), is used to make a transition in the text or to designate a cluster for subordination. The fifth signaling device, the box signal ( ), is used to identify which cluster(s) of sentences on a page of text are to be used for a sentence combining activity.

Using the Basal for Sentence Combining

The basal is an obvious source of short, choppy sentences readily available to the classroom teacher to improve comprehension and composition using sentence combining. Integrating reading and writing instruction is currently receiving a great deal of attention (Pearson, 1985). One study by Eckhoff (1983) reported that children who read basal stories produced written stories which mirrored the abbreviated language of their reading materials. Further, research on sentence combining training has been shown to impact students' reading comprehension as well as compositional abilities (White and Karl, 1981). Both of these strands of research seem to indicate the potential of using sentence combining in conjunction with the basal to improve comprehension of the stories read as well as to effectively integrate reading and writing instruction. It is our aim through this approach to explicitly illustrate for teachers and children that reading and writing can and should be complementary language processes rather than isolated, competing language processes.

To begin, a selected basal story could be surveyed paying particular attention to those sentence structures in the story which would be amenable to a sentence-combining activity. Caution should be exercised during the intial phase of sentence combining instruction not to overdo it by choosing too many sentences for rewriting activities. The object of using the basal for writing instruction is quality and consistency of instruction, not quantity. As younger children begin to understand the tasks involved in sentence combining and build up a small collection of sentence combining skills, increasing numbers of sentence clusters can be selected. To preserve the identity of the basal stories as the basis for the writing lesson, pages of the story can be photocopied and overhead transparencies produced to be used during sentence combining instruction.

To make initial sentence combining instruction successful for students to learn and apply, several techniques can be used during introductory lessons. First, clusters of sentences in the basal stories which would be amenable to this approach can be identified by using the box signaling device. The box focuses children's attention

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

immediately upon the elements to be combined. Examples of excerpts taken from basal stories employing the four sentence combining techniques and signaling devices are found in your Appendix B. Also, selected full pages used as in demonstrations in this session are found in Appendix C.

Summary

The concept of using the basal as a composing book for sentence combining is appealing for several reasons. First, research has shown that sentence combining and other instructional activities which familiarize students with their reading materials through writing activities increase comprehension. Second, since teaching reading with a basal is the most prevelant form of reading instruction in the U.S., most teachers will have ready access to a basal for teaching reading and writing using a sentence-combining approach. This means that you will not need to invest additional effort in the creation of sentence combining activities. Third, a portion of the rationale associated with the Language Experience Approach (Lee and Allen, 1963) seems to support rather simply and powerfully the use of the basal as a sentence-combining composing book to improve students' reading and writing skills — I can read what I can write.

This approach was never intended to become a complete, self-contained language arts program, but rather it was designed to complement the traditional components of the reading and language arts curriculum. In short, employing the reading basal as a sentence combining composing book for improving reading and writing instruction makes sense. Using this approach, you will be able to more explicitly relate reading and writing instruction in the classroom.

Appendix A

Coordinating Conjunctions

and but for nor or so yet (;)

Correlative Conjunctions

both .... and, either ..... or, neither ..... nor, not only .... but also

Conjunctive Adverbs

also besides consequently furthermore however indeed likewise moreover nevertheless nonetheless similarly then therefore thus

Subordinating Conjuctions

after although as because before if how since so that unless until when where while

ED 1238

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Addition

Example 1 - Primary Level:

Cluster:

> I put on my detective hat.
> I took my notebook and pencil.
> I put a note where my mother could see it.

"Nate the Great" Pg. 75

Potential Writeout:

I put on my detective hat, took my notebook and pencil, and put a note where my mother could see it.

Example 2 - Intermediate Level:

Cluster:

> He loved to see it shine like a mirror in the sun.
> He loved to hear it ring as it fell from his fingers.
> He loved to build stacks of it and watch it gleam.

"King Midas" Pg. 33

Potential Writeout:

He loved to see it shine like a mirror in the sun, ring as it fell from his fingers, and build stacks of it and watch it gleam.

Embedding

Example 3 - Primary Level:

Cluster:

King was a pup when Elizabeth first got him.
He was not a big pup.

"King" Pg.84

Potential Writeout:

King was not a big pup when Elizabeth first got him.

Example 4 - Intermediate Level:

Cluster:

She had been lying under her knitted coverlet staring up at

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

the ceiling.
It was an interesting ceiling.

"Upstairs and Downstairs" Pg. 228

Potential Writeout:

She had been lying under her knitted coverlet staring up at the <u>interesting</u> ceiling.

Coordination

Example 5 - Primary Level:

Cluster:

(,)SO — Louis Braille knew that blind people could feel bumps that were made on paper.
He made up an alphabet of raised dots that could be read with the fingertips.

"Stevie's Other Eyes" Pg. 188

Potential Writeout:

Louis Braille knew that blind people could feel bumps that were made on paper,<u>so</u> he made up an alphabet of raised dots that could be read with the fingertips.

Example 6 - Intermediate Level:

Cluster:

Some of the members of the Nirokuan School were very proud and difficult persons.
They thought haiku should be written only in certain definite ways, in very special, elegant, flowing language.

"The Memory of Beauty" Pg. 489

Potential Writeout:

Some of the members of the Nirokuan School were very proud and difficult persons<u>; consequently,</u> they thought haiku should be written only in certain definite ways, in very special, elegant, flowing language.

Subordination

Example 7 - Primary Level:

Cluster:

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Ropes are put around the logs.
The logs are put on big trucks.

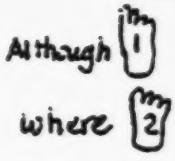
"Trees and Paper" Pg. 72

Potential Writeout:

<u>After</u> ropes are put around the logs, the logs are put on big trucks.

Example 8: Intermediate Level:

Cluster:



Tsali and his family did not want to go.
They escaped into the high mountains.
Later Tsali was killed.

"Haunted American History" Pg. 159

Potential Writeout:

<u>Although</u> Tsali and his family did not want to go, they escaped into the high mountains, <u>where</u> later Tsali was killed.

Example Using a Variety of Sentence Combining Techniques

Example 9:

Cluster:

Benny Tensed.
He had heard something!
The room to the left.
A funny sound, almost human, yet slightly different.

"The "Empty" that Wasn't Empty" Pg. 23

Potential Writeout:

Benny tensed because he had heard a funny sound, almost human, yet slightly different in the room to the left.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

KING

King was a pup when Elizabeth first got him. He was not a big pup.

"See!" Elizabeth said to Dad. "He can fit in a big cup!"

"King has big paws," said Dad. "He will be a big dog. You will have to show him WHAT to do. And you will have to show him what NOT to do."

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Nate the Great

by MARJORIE WEINMAN SHARMAT

My name is Nate the Great.
I am a detective.
Let me tell you about my last case.

I had just eaten breakfast.
I had pancakes.
I like pancakes.

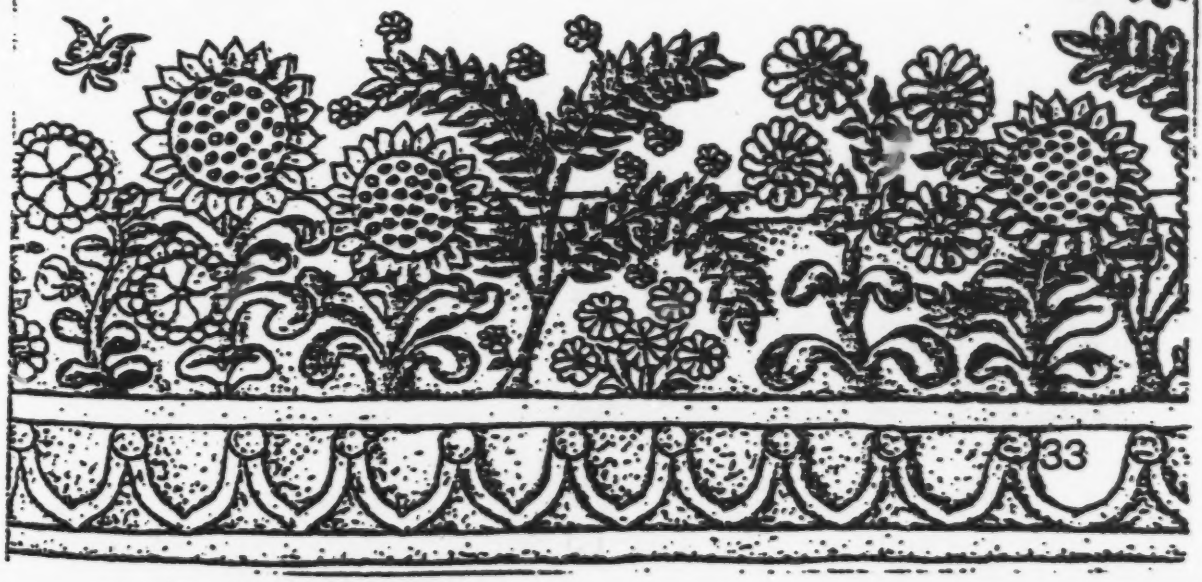
Then Annie called me.
Annie is my friend.
She lives down the street.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Long ago, there lived a king named Midas. King Midas loved gold. He loved to see it shine like a mirror in the sun. He loved to hear it ring as it fell from his fingers. He loved to build stacks of it and watch it gleam.

Each morning, King Midas counted his gold as he ate in his garden. And after he counted it once, King Midas would count the gold again and wish for more. The only thing on earth that King Midas loved more than gold was his daughter.

Every morning, his daughter brought flowers to King Midas. Her sweet smile always made the King happy. But with each day, he saw less beauty in the flowers.



BEST COPY AVAILABLE

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

SELECTED REFERENCES

Eckhoff, Barbara. "How Reading Affects Children's Writing." Language Arts, vol. 60 (May, 1983), pp. 607-616.

Lee, Doris, and Allen, Roach Van. "Learning to Read Through Experience." New York, New York: Appleton Century Crafts, 1963.

Pearson, P. David "Changing the Face of Reading Comprehension Instruction." The Reading Teacher, vol. 38 (April 1985), pgs. 724 - 738.

Smith, Carl "Writers Read Better: Specific Practices to Improve Comprehension." Twelfth Southwest Regional IRA Conference, Little Rock, Arkansas, 1983.

Strong, William. "Sentence Combining: A Composing Book." New York, New York: Random House, 1983.

Strong, William. "Sentence Combining and Paragraph Building." New York, New York: Random House, 1981.

White, Regine S, and Karl, Herb. "Reading, Writing, and Sentence Combining: The Track Record." Reading Improvement, vol.17, (Fall, 1980), pp. 226-323.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE